



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Apache-Sitgreaves
National Forests

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File Code: 2210

Date: May 1, 2015

Wiltbank Ranch, LLC
Whitney Wiltbank
P.O. Box 880
Eagar, AZ 85925

Dear Whitney:

Please find enclosed your copy of the 2015 Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Sprucedale/Reno Allotment.

The pasture rotation schedule and monitoring dates have been identified for your information. The level of authorized use and grazing schedule as indicated in this AOI are based on the best information available at this time. These are subject to change as actual site specific forage conditions and available livestock watering sources are determined at the start of and during the annual authorized season of use.

The allotment boundary and interior fences should be repaired before entering your allotment. A well maintained fence will keep your herd in the proper pasture and prevents unauthorized use by cattle from your neighboring allotment. You are responsible to keep the improvements listed in your Term Grazing Permit in a functional condition. If you have any questions and/or comments, please feel free to call me or my Range personnel at (928) 339-5000 or (928) 333-4372.

Sincerely,

ED HOLLOWAY JR.
District Ranger

Enclosures



Annual Operating Instructions
SPRUCEDALE-RENO C&H ALLOTMENT
 Alpine Ranger District
 Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests

2015 Grazing Season

1. PASTURE USE SCHEDULE

I have approved your application to graze 85 head of horses and 8 head of cattle on the Sprucedale-Reno Allotment. The eight (8) head of cattle will be grazed along with Walter Wiltbank for the grazing season.

Grazing Rotation Schedule:

Horses

Pasture	On	Off	Days	Comments
Becker	7/15	8/15	32	
Hospital*	8/16	9/8	24	*If water is available in the Horse 1 & 2 pastures, then they will be used in place of Hospital.
Stony Flat	9/9	10/10	32	
Rocky Prairie I	10/11	10/31	21	
Horse 1, Horse 2*	RESTED			

Cattle

Pasture	On	Off	Days	Comments
North	07/15	08/15	32	
Middle	08/16	09/24	40	
Rocky Prairie 2	09/25	10/31	37	
Bear Creek	RESTED			

The schedule above is an estimate, and may be modified at any time during the grazing season if the utilization levels, identified below, are met, if water availability is inadequate, or for other resource management reasons. If allowable use levels are met early in the scheduled pasture, cattle will be rotated into the next pasture or off the Forest. If you are scheduled to rotate livestock to the next pasture, but feel there is adequate forage to sustain them in the current pasture and would prefer to hold off on the rotation, please contact my range personnel for an inspection and approval. No re-grazing of any pasture will be allowed. Cattle & Horses are to be completely removed from a pasture by the off date unless otherwise authorized. Please notify this office when you begin to move cattle and when a pasture rotation is complete.

2. UTILIZATION STANDARDS

The following utilization standards will be applied on the Sprucedale-Reno Allotment

- 45% use, by weight of current year's growth, on riparian perennial forage and browse species.

- 40% use, by weight of current year's growth, on upland forage and browse species.
- Within Northern goshawk territories, a utilization level in forested areas (includes small openings) of: 20% average by weight of grass and forbs and 40% of browse species.
- Within Mexican spotted owl habitat, in order to maintain prey species habitat needs, a utilization level of 20-40% of forage and browse species.

3. KEY AREA MONITORING

Utilization levels will be checked prior to livestock entering the allotment and near the midpoint, or sooner, of the grazing period for each pasture at key areas. A key area is defined as:

“a portion of range, which because of its location, grazing or browsing value, and/or use, serves as an indicative sample of range conditions, trend, or degree of use seasonally. A key area guides the general area of which it is part” (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June, 1997).

Utilization measurements will be taken on key livestock forage plants (key species). Key forage species is defined as:

“1. Forage species (plants) whose use serves as an indicator to the degree of use of associated species. In many cases, key species include indicator species and species traditionally referenced as increaser, decrease, desirables, or intermediates. 2. Those species (plants) which must, because of their importance, be considered in the management program” (Forest Service Region 3 Rangeland and Analysis Management Guide, June 1997).

- Riparian areas will be monitored for use on riparian woody species' current year's leaders, as well as % use, by weight on riparian grasses.
- Upland areas will be monitored for use on perennial grass species.
- Mexican spotted owl protected and restricted habitat will be monitored to ensure that current management is providing cover for rodent prey species, the residual biomass that will support prescribed natural and ignited fires that would reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire in the Forest, and regeneration of riparian trees and shrubs.

District personnel will contact the permittees to coordinate site visits to monitor key areas, when practical. Permittee participation is encouraged. Forage utilization estimates will be consistent with the Forest Service Range Analysis Handbook methodology, and may also include FS Regional stubble-height standards, as well as other techniques generally accepted in the field of range management.

4. RANGE IMPROVEMENTS

Range improvements must be maintained to standard before cattle are allowed into a pasture. It is the permittee's responsibility to ensure that range improvements remain functional. This includes boundary fences in pastures not currently being grazed. Fences must remain in a state that prevents the passage of cattle. Routine maintenance of existing improvements does not require written clearance; however, construction/reconstruction of improvements must be authorized in writing from this office.

5. SPECIAL MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

The following restrictions will be implemented so that management remains in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The instructions below relate to threatened, endangered, and proposed to be listed species, as well as range/watershed conditions.

- No salt or mineral block may be placed in protected and restricted Mexican spotted owl habitat from March 1 to August 31, and no concentrations of livestock (i.e., corral use, traps, or large gatherings of livestock).
- Stock tanks must be surveyed for possible aquatic habitat before earth-disturbing maintenance is authorized.

6. OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

The permittee must obtain permission from the District Ranger, before conducting earth-disturbing activities on the National Forest. The Forest Service will arrange inspections of project areas and will prepare appropriate environmental and cultural documents before earth-disturbing activities proceed. These activities include road/earthen tank maintenance, as well as construction/reconstruction of trails, roads, earthen tanks, etc. Do not conduct any earth-disturbing activities on the Forest without written clearance from this office.

Salt must be located at least ¼ mile from water, and preferably on ridges and/or areas of low use. Do not place salt blocks in the same location as the previous year, and locate blocks on hard ground not susceptible to erosion. Supplemental feeding, other than mineral or supplement block is not authorized on the National Forest.

The Annual Operating Instructions are a part of the Term Grazing Permit as provided for in Part 1, Section 3, and comply with the standards and guidelines found in the Forest Plan. They also comply with the Endangered Species Act found in the Biological Assessment for the Sprucedale-Reno Allotment. Any additional information collected during the year may be incorporated into the Annual Operating Instructions.